

FireFighter

The magazine of the Fire Brigades Union www.fbu.org.uk

July/August 2006

WIN
A PORTABLE
DAB RADIO
see p22

NEW DIMENSION

**You say we need more
equipment, staff and training**



**Why women
firefighters say
NO to shift
changes**

They're **NOT**
family
friendly



Cuts fightback

The latest on FBU
campaigns across
the country



**What does
a regional
official do?**

Pete Wilcox on what
keeps him busy



Employers refuse to guarantee pay formula



You will have seen the result of the Stage 5 Pay Settlement. This produced a 2.7% increase from July 1 as well as additional

increases as agreed back in 2003.

Whatever views people may have of the actual percentage rise it is a fact that pay in the fire service has been settled by means of a formula for most of the time since 1978. It is the view of myself and the Executive Council that the service would benefit from some stability on the issue of pay and therefore at the National Joint Council meeting on 12 June we asked the employers to give a commitment that the formula would remain in place for 2007. Unfortunately the employers stated that they were unable to give such a commitment and that they may be likely to seek further changes from the FBU in return for a pay settlement in 2007. This is a worrying development.

Firefighters on all duty systems and in all parts of the service (and emergency fire control staff who of course have faced the additional pressure from the threat of regionalisation) have clearly demonstrated over many years an ability to adapt to changing demands, to take on new skills in the interests of the service as a whole. It is therefore perfectly reasonable that we should be able to expect decent pay rises without strings being constantly attached.

I hope that the employers will appreciate our arguments and I am sure members will watch this

issue with great interest.

CPD/LSI

Members across the country will be rightly concerned about developments in relation to continual professional development payments and the phasing out of long service Increments.

In accordance with the 2003 agreement the Union has participated in a joint working party to try to reach agreement on CPD payments. This has been a difficult task. However some progress has been made although final agreement has not been able to be reached in sufficient time. The Union therefore sought agreement from the employers that the phasing out arrangements for LSI should be delayed. In our view there would be little or no financial cost to the employers from introducing such a delay. We attempted to reach such an agreement through various discussions including at the National Joint Council on 12 June. As we go to print unfortunately no such agreement has been reached.

I have been contacting fire and rescue authority chairs and chief fire officers seeking a sensible solution to this problem. I hope that they will fully understand the anger which will be caused if LSI is phased out without the CPD arrangements being agreed.

Local cuts

As I write this column members in Hertfordshire are considering the way forward for their campaign against the cuts in the local IRMP.

Hertfordshire members are to

BRIAN GALLAGHER



be congratulated for the stance they have taken so far and for the unity they have maintained between wholtime and retained members, between firefighters and middle managers, and between those in fire stations and those working in control and other departments.

Unfortunately we are already

aware that similar issues are arising in other parts of the country. Members in Cleveland are also now facing a ballot for industrial action.

I would urge politicians within the fire service to start taking more notice of the views of the people who actually do the job on the ground. However,



YOUR LETTERS

Mutual assistance

Regarding the General Secretary's editorial in the May issue of *Firefighter* – The never ending story – I would like to offer the following observations.

I retired from the job twenty years ago and I realise things have changed considerably in that time, including the re-writing of the Fire Services Act 1947.

I am sure, however, that the fundamentals of the act still apply, in particular, that section of the act, covering "Mutual Assistance" (over the border calls). If Buncefield proved nothing else, it certainly proved the necessity and justification of that section.

That therefore poses the question, why are individual brigades fighting local authorities on their own? Using Humberside as an example, any reduction of fire cover in that brigade can and will have a knock on effect on South Yorkshire and Lincolnshire, so that in the least makes it a regional matter. I am sure it is not beyond the wit of the Executive Council to formulate an argument in support of this point.

Mick O'Connor
Out of trade member
London



if they fail to do so such conflict regrettably becomes inevitable.

I would urge all members to continue to show full support by whatever means they can to members involved in local action in Hertfordshire, Cleveland or anywhere else.

Matt Wrack

→ We do not publish letters where only an email address is supplied, please include full postal address and/or membership number. We may edit letters. Letters should be sent to FBU Head Office: Bradley House, 68 Coombe Road, Kingston upon Thames KT2 7AE or firefighter@fbu.org.uk

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PUZZLES

WIN
a digital radio
see p22

Take part in our prize quiz and win a Pure Oasis – the world's first rechargeable digital radio that can withstand outdoor life. It can survive in a garden, bathroom, campsite or building site. Its rugged build makes it the perfect travel mate and users can connect an iPod or other audio device.



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GUY SMALLMAN



ANDREW PARSONS/PA/EMPGS

Cambridgeshire firefighters tackle a city centre blaze

Cambs reaches crewing level, working practices agreement

WORKING PRACTICES

The FBU has come to a new agreement with Cambridgeshire fire authority on crewing levels and future working practices that, for the first time ever, will see the service maintaining a minimum of five riders on all frontline fire appliances and two on all specialist vehicles.

The deal has also clawed back a number of earlier job losses and created four new crew manager and two control operator posts. An overtime policy in line with the Grey Book has also been agreed. It can now

be used to crew appliances to five riders rather than to the previous minimum of four.

"The agreement is a great result for the members in Cambridgeshire," said Brigade Secretary Paul Clarke. "For the very first time we will have five riders on all frontline appliances. This will put the health and safety of our members at the forefront of fire service policy.

"The brigade negotiating team worked long and hard to put forward extremely strong evidence-based arguments and through that hard work helped deliver a significant victory for our members."

"But ultimately these advances have only been possible because Cambridgeshire members showed they were prepared to fight in defence of the local fire service by mandating us to register a lawful trade dispute if talks did not deliver any significant results. For that they must be congratulated.

"I would also like to place on record the thanks of the Brigade Committee to our Regional Officials and EC member for their invaluable help and support throughout, with special thanks going to Doug Christie at Thompsons for his legal advice and draft trade dispute."

Union battles over schools fire cover

AUTOMATIC FIRE ALARMS

A plan to cut the number of fire appliances sent to fire calls at some schools in Central Scotland has been suspended after pressure from the FBU and the leader of Falkirk Council.

Central Scotland Fire and Rescue Service has slashed the number of appliances despatched from three to one, unless the automatic fire alarm is accompanied by a 999 call. But now all schools, along with other non-commercial properties, will be exempt.

Council leader David Alexander said he was shocked by the suggested reduction in fire cover for non-commercial properties, especially since it was without "proper consultation" with the education authority and had not been referred to the fire board

School buildings are full of children during the day and need an adequate response, says the FBU

for approval.

Secretary of FBU Central Scotland, Gordon McQuade said the speed at which a classroom at Raploch Primary School was destroyed by fire in April last year showed the necessity of sending two fully equipped crews to certain AFAs.

"You cannot get away from the fact that 98 per cent of responses to automatic fire systems are false alarms. But in this area there have been serious fires at both Deanburn Primary in Bo'ness, Raploch Primary in Stirling, and incidents at Larbert Village and Larbert High.

"We are against down-grading the number of fire appliances sent to schools. We believe, during the day, when the buildings are full of children, the number of appliances sent should remain as at present."



ROY PETERS/REPORTDIGITAL.CO.UK

FBU warns on personal injury claims

LEGAL SERVICES

The union has warned once again of the danger of members going to claims companies following accidents. National officer Paul Woolstenholmes said there were no guarantees of quality and members could end up paying much more money for poor advice.

"The FBU uses the best personal injury lawyers in the country. We don't just offer help to members for workplace injuries but also family members injured in, say, traffic accidents.

"Thompsons provide a very high quality service that need not cost you or your family a penny. There is no need to go off to 'no win, no fee' claims companies where there is no guarantee of either."

Doug Christie from Thompsons said:



T H O M P S O N S
S O L I C I T O R S

"Thompsons has more offices than any other personal injury firm in the country. FBU members and members of their family will get high quality legal advice whichever part of the UK they are in."

■ If you need legal help or advice ring the free FBU legal advice line, managed by Thompsons: 0808 100 6061.

Sounding off!

RUTH WINTERS

President, FBU

Tolpuddle – trade union rights then and now

In my office I have a framed copy of the statement made by George Loveless, one of the Tolpuddle Martyrs, at the Crown Court 19 March 1834. It's a constant reminder of why we as a movement exist and the need for free and accountable trade unions. But even that is not enough without the right to take action to defend workers and their rights.



George Loveless memorial, Tolpuddle

It is therefore apt that once again the FBU will be attending the Tolpuddle Festival on 14 to 16 July and, as trade unionists and as workers who are now fighting to reclaim those rights, so hard fought for by the martyrs and those who have followed, supporting a new Trade Union Freedom Bill. We know only too well

about the legal restrictions, hoops and unfair practices on workers that are forced to take industrial action. It must therefore be one of our key aims to do something about changing this.

Trade unions in the UK now have less rights in relation to industrial action than elsewhere in Europe, in fact we have fewer rights than we had 100 years ago. The proposed Trade Union Freedom Bill is a small step towards rectifying this ridiculous and unfair embarrassment.

The Bill calls for the abolition of restrictive balloting procedures and industrial action notice procedure, a redefinition of a trade dispute and solidarity action, the right to automatic reinstatement for taking lawful industrial action, no use of replacement labour and dealing in a fairer manner with the issue of injunction. As you can see, not a radical list of aims. But it's a start that the TUC and affiliates must get behind and a list of aims that we must raise with our MPs and discuss and debate within our membership.

With the ever possible threat of the removal of the right to strike by this Government hanging over us, we must remember the Tolpuddle Martyrs, not only by attending the festival and celebrating what they achieved, but by campaigning and winning back true rights for working people, trade unions and their members.

➔ For more info on Tolpuddle visit www.tuc.org.uk/tolpuddlefestival

Write to your MP asking them to support Early Day Motion 1170 – Campaign for a Trade Union Freedom Bill. Visit: www.fbu.org.uk/aboutus/political/epetition.php

Government paying CFOA close to £1 million a year

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION

Central Government has massively increased the money it pays to the Chief Fire Officers Association and has now hit £815,000 a year or £17,700 for every chief fire officer in England. The figures were revealed in response to a Parliamentary Question by John McDonnell MP, chair of the FBU parliamentary group.

Since 2003/4 CFOA have been given grants totalling over £2.7 million from either the Department of Communities and Local Government or its predecessor the ODPM. The previous year the organisation received only £150,000 from central Government.

General Secretary Matt Wrack said: "Fire authorities, councillors and MPs need to be made aware of how very dependant CFOA is on central Government for cash. There has to be a huge question mark over whether, as an organisation, it is independent of Government in the normal sense of the word."



MP John McDonnell's Parliamentary Question revealed the extent of government funding for the CFOA

JESS HURD/REPORTDIGITAL.CO.UK

In brief

■ Gordon Brown's call for a pay freeze for public service workers, is "yet another blow to staff morale which is already at breaking point," said John McDonnell MP, Chair of the Public Services Not Private Profit campaign. He said thousands of trade unionists would be lobbying their MPs on 27 June to demand "public services that serve public need rather than corporate greed."

■ TUC General Secretary Brendan Barber has welcomed the Pensions White Paper, published in May, hailing the fact that union demands for a state pension linked to earnings, compulsory employer contributions and a fairer system for women have been included. He reiterated union opposition to raising the state pension age.

■ The Department of Communities and Local Government Guidance has issued guidance notes ahead of changes to fire safety law in October 2006. More "complex" buildings "will probably need to be assessed by a person who has comprehensive training or experience in fire risk assessment," it says. The fire safety order will do away with fire certificates.

■ 115 trade unionists were murdered in 2005, more than 1,600 were violently assaulted and 9,000 arrested, said the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions' annual survey of trade union rights violations. Colombia again topped the list for killings and intimidation.

■ Recently retired EC member Brian Joyce is preparing for his fourth solidarity trip to Iraq on behalf of the FBU, bringing fire engines and other equipment to firefighters in Iraqi Kurdistan in the autumn. A number of FBU regions have pledged support, but he needs additional help. Contact: dave.green@fbu.org.uk. More at: www.fbu.org.uk/campaigns/international



Brian Joyce with firefighters in Basra where he distributed fireproof clothing donated by the FBU in 2004

GUY SMALLMAN



PAUL BOX/REPORTDIGITAL.CO.UK

FBU presses DTI on firesafe cigarettes

FIRE SAFETY

The Union has written to the Trade and Industry Secretary Alistair Darling pressing him for measures to ensure only "firesafe" cigarettes are available for sale in the UK.

These cigarettes put themselves out and would greatly reduce the numbers of deaths and injuries

in dwelling fires.

The union said the cigarettes – now available in a number of countries – would cut fire deaths and injuries, reduce risks to fire crews, and cut fire damage and economic losses.

The FBU urged his Department to support such measure during European wide discussions under the General Product Safety Directive.

ANDREW MILLIGAN/PA/EMPICS



200 firefighters worked throughout the night on 11 May 2004 following the collapse of the Stockline Plastics factory in Glasgow

FIFTH COLUMN

An anonymous take on events in a brigade near you

So the chief fire officer of Strathclyde thinks that the reason that his staff are suffering stress is down to the little neds and nedettes who are tossing bottles and bricks at his loyal crews? The whole feeling of helplessness and anxiety is down to a few louts. Nothing to do with the fact that the management of the service has been so busy looking after themselves at the trough that they have allowed, yet again, the moral of the members to fall. The man with more faces than a town clock has conducted forums to talk direct to all members. These are during your working hours and are compulsory.

The 'vision' for the future depends, it seems, on which way the 'golden child' rises from bed that morning.. The latest scam is to steal away the members' stand down on a Saturday and Sunday night, which had been negotiated during the poll tax fiasco. In return for a 50p a week (1994) reduction in the £2.48 travel allowance (negotiated after the 1974 Glasgow strike) Strathclyde members finally got to enjoy the same conditions as the rest of Scotland. These conditions have now been swept away in order to tick a box for a bunch of accountants. This was done by consultation: that is, this is what we want and that's what we are doing, end of message, implement policy.

STRATHCLYDE

So our chief thinks stress is all down to a few louts?

Try looking at your own practices to find the reason for all the stress in your workers and stop trying to blame outside influences!

Now that we can do overtime again some of the old stories of how it used to work are coming to light. Although the way senior management are seeking to do things today is no less scandalous. Such as using a retained duty system firefighter on wholetime shifts. Not a major problem as we are all firefighters just working different duty systems and the firefighters' main employer allowed them to leave 30 minutes early to start their night shift. And they do not have to start until half an hour later in the morning to

allow them time to travel from the station to their work. One was a crane driver and another a HGV Driver. Health and safety: what's that! Needless to say after these came to light after proper policies for this type of working have been agreed. Then there's instances where some personnel now have over 200 hours in the overtime book at specialist water rescue stations. Just a wee bit more than the limit of 24 hours averaged over six months under the Grey Book. Unsurprisingly, budgets for overtime are going through the roof. How will they pay for it? More job cuts?

Iranian women make their way home past an anti-aircraft gun at the conclusion of a rally in front of the Natanz Uranium Enrichment Facility, 200 miles south of Tehran

VAHID SALEMI/AP/EMPICS



Don't attack Iran

MAGGIE BOWDEN, GENERAL SECRETARY, LIBERATION

“After months of mounting tension, the US proposal in early June to engage in direct talks with Iran over its civil nuclear programme offers hope that previous threats of a US-led military attack on the country may be averted. The US offer to take part in the first talks between the two countries after three decades followed pressure from the European Union and Russia. The offer came after Russian and China resisted western moves in the UN security council to impose sanctions against Iran over its refusal to halt the programme.

In a process similar to the build-up to the Iraq war in 2002, the US and Britain allege that Iran is trying to develop nuclear weapons - a goal which Iran has always denied. Iran has said all along that its nuclear programme is part of its economic development and it has no intention of developing nuclear weapons.

Last August, Iran announced that it had resumed uranium enrichment after voluntarily suspending it since 2003 during talks with the European Union over its nuclear programme. Iran said the resumption was due to the EU's lack of inclusion of Iran's inalienable right to the nuclear fuel cycle as guaranteed in the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). Iran's right to develop civil nuclear power is overwhelmingly accepted by most Iranians inside and outside Iran.

Despite scaremongering by the US administration that Iran is developing nuclear weapons, the U.S. Director of National Intelligence John Negroponte admitted on 2 June that it would take Tehran until as late as 2015 to develop a bomb. Meanwhile Iranian diplomats keep trying to tell the world that nuclear weapons are 'against the precepts of Islam', a position held by Iran since the 1979 revolution.

It is worth recalling that the US supported Iran's civil nuclear programme under the Shah in the 1960s and 1970s. Also the US obsession with Iran's alleged nuclear plans is not apparent with neighbour Israel's development of nuclear weapons, which has taken place without any international observation or inspection. India and Pakistan, both outside the NPT system, have developed nuclear weapons and George W Bush plans to reward India with nuclear technology in return for closer economic ties.

News reports have failed to mention that all the major powers have failed to implement their obligations under the NPT to get rid of their nuclear weapons. None of them face UN sanctions.

The whole case against Iran rests on the idea that because of its support for anti-Israeli

Hezbollah guerrillas in Lebanon, its support for the Palestinians in the occupied territories, and the aggressive rhetoric against Israel, we should fear Iranian aggression. But rhetoric and reality are not the same - as we saw with Saddam Hussein. Unlike Iraq, Iran has not attacked any of its neighbours for more than two centuries. But it has been invaded many times: by Britain, Russia and Turkey in the early 1900s; and in 1979 by Iraq, which was supplied with Western and Soviet arms. Iran also suffered a US/UK-backed coup after the popular nationalist prime minister, Mohammed Mossadeq, nationalised the country's oil industry in 1953.

The image of an omnipotent Iranian president is also false. There is a power struggle within the elite as well as between the regime and the people, a great number of whom continue to suffer brutal state repression. But any threat of attack will rally nationalist sentiment and bolster the hardliners. Certainly the Iranians are not going to roll over and welcome the Americans the way we were told the Iraqis would welcome them, which turned out to be untrue.

Some people are saying that America is not stupid enough to attack Iran because Iraq is in such a mess. However, we should not be complacent at all. Iran has been part of George Bush's 'axis of evil' since the 9/11 attacks. With various policy statements since 2001, the administration has adopted a policy of pre-emptive military action against states it does not like and has made it clear all along that it wants regime change in Iran.

Even a so-called 'limited' missile strike on nuclear installations, some of which are in built-up areas where civilians are at risk, would provoke retaliation. Iran would probably unleash client forces against western targets in Iraq and Afghanistan, as well as from Syria and Lebanon. If the confrontation between Iran and the West escalates to a strike on suspected Iranian nuclear facilities, it could spark a war that will stretch across the region from Lebanon to South Asia.

Despite an apparent softening of the US stance, direct talks are conditional on Iran suspending uranium enrichment, a qualification Iran has already ruled out. And there remains the threat that it must comply within weeks or face sanctions. Such threats only help the Iranian regime and make it harder for people to resist repression. The best way to help the Iranians is to support the democratic movement for change and oppose any attack on Iran.

Part Two of our coverage of shifts. The Union asked women firefighters if they wanted the existing 2-2-3 system to change. 96.9% said No. Kerry Baigent, National Women's Committee Secretary reports

Hard times ahead?

"Existing shift systems can be disruptive to family life, unnecessarily inflexible as well as discouraging diversity and equal opportunities."

Who made this comment? Was it:

- A) The National Women's Committee of the Fire Brigades Union? **NO**
- B) A woman? **NO**
- C) Even from a firefighter? **NO**

This comment was made by Professor George Bain in his paper *The Future of the Fire Service: reducing risk, saving lives 2002*.

How did the National Women's Committee respond to George Bain's comment?

We were furious. No-one had spoken to us or asked us what we thought. In fact the London Fire Brigade at that time was promoting the existing 2-2-3* shift system as family friendly to encourage women to join! So in February 2003 we carried out our own survey of women to see if George Bain was right.

Women members working the 2-2-3 shift system told us that it wasn't a barrier to equality, diversity and the recruitment of women. Indeed, among all our members with a family, childcare or caring commitments, it was seen as conducive to, if not positively promoting, a good family life. Armed with these findings, the Union made it clear at the time that by using the 'equality' angle and 'women' to promote the removal of the 2-2-3 shift system, Bain and the employers were actually working against good relationships between men and women in the fire service and that they were likely to discourage the recruit-

ment and retention of women firefighters. We believed that such an argument was both divisive and unfounded. Divisive in that using women as an excuse to change the shift system created a backlash against women among men who saw it as something that women had brought upon the service. And unfounded because the reality is that women are arguing that the current shift system is family friendly and they do not support change.

Disappointingly, even though women spoke out against changes to the shift system, fire service employers have continued to use Bain's unfounded argument that the existing shift system was discouraging "diversity and equal opportunities". And, as we feared, it has divided our members along gender lines. Some male FBU members believe the smokescreen argument and blame women for the attacks on their way of life!

This attempt by employers to divide the workforce is not unprecedented. Recent academic research (Johnson and Wright, 2005) shows that women can often become scapegoats for changes made in the fire service, contributing to the harassment that some women suffer and undermining union solidarity.

The new research: Who did it and why?

In the last edition of *Firefighter*, I referred to some new research that has been carried out by Dr Dave Baigent from Anglia Ruskin University. Part of this research sought to identify women's views on the shift system. The FBU asked for the early release of his raw data to better inform the debate around the current shift system and changes to it apparently for family friendly reasons.

What does this new research tell us?

It tells us that **96.9%** of all women who work the 2-2-3 shift system support it.

What does this research really mean for the Fire and Rescue Service?

Well, the Government is currently running a national campaign to raise awareness of firefighting as a career opportunity for women. This campaign is one way that the Government hopes to achieve the targets it set to increase the number of women employed as firefighters. But at the same time the Government continues to use a false argument – made by Bain – that the shift system needs changing because it is not family friendly. The new research, showing that 96.9% of women firefighters currently working the 2-2-3 shift system would not like to see it change, sends a strong message to Government that the shift system is a great tool for the recruitment and retention of women. This starts a new debate.

WHAT THE WOMEN SAID

The research wasn't just a matter of number crunching. Women firefighters were invited to comment. Below are some examples

This is the best system, planned changes to 11pm – 11am would ensure my leaving due to childcare.

*Yes the *** Brigade are about to change the shift pattern which unfortunately will probably mean that I and a lot of the female firefighters with children will have no option but to resign because of the new start times.*

If the current shift system changed and I decide to have children, I would have to reconsider my job

What better family shift can you get (none). I will have to consider my future carefully if they change my shift pattern.

If it changes I will consider other employment.

I've worked this system for four years. The new [OSCA] shifts [in West Midlands Fire Service] are highly family unfriendly for me.



Women say many of the proposed changes to shifts are family unfriendly. Employers aren't listening

The National Women's Committee believes that the fire and rescue service needs to re-think its current strategy. If our employers truly want to understand the issues around the employment of women firefighters then they must look at this data, re-evaluate their current position and work with the National Womens Committee of the FBU. Such an arrangement would benefit all firefighters in general and women firefighters in particular. As part of this debate the Government need to reconsider the pressure that individual fire and rescue services are under to score points in their audits by ticking the box that they are achieving shift changes.

The National Women's Committee expect that the appointment of Angela Smith MP as the first woman Minister for the fire and rescue service, will start a debate that is inclusive of the FBU and in particular the FBU National Womens Committee. Talking can only be

positive for all and could stop the divisions between men and women that are occurring because the fire and rescue service is using an unsubstantiated comment from Bain as an argument for change to the shift system. If the fire and rescue Service wants to keep women in the Service as firefighters then it needs to listen to our informed and well-researched argument in support of the current shift system.

→ Data indicating how women firefighters view the current shift system can be found on www.fitting-in.com/decade/shift.pdf and the National Womens Committee report into the 2-2-3 shift system can be found on our website www.nwcfbu.co.uk

* 2-2-3: This shift system is commonly referred to as 2-2-4 (as it was in the research). But the NWC, for one, argues it is 2-2-3 since firefighters work nine hours of the first day off!

Resources:

more n

The fire service does not have enough personnel, equipment or training to deal with the aftermath of a New Dimensions incident, according to a poll for the FBU

More than threequarters – 84% of those polled – said the service was understaffed, 83% thought it under-equipped and there was considerable concern about the amount of training being undertaken with many finding it inadequate.

The 84% of those saying the service was understaffed is made up of 65% who said the fire service needed considerably more personnel and 19% who said the service needed lightly more personnel. Only 10% thought there was enough staff and only 1% thought there was more than enough staff.

Of the 83% who said the service was under-equipped 58% thought the service needed considerably more equipment and 25% thought slightly more equipment. Only 11% thought there was enough equipment to give a proper response and only 1% thought there was more than enough equipment to give a proper response.

Only one in five had taken part in a full scale exercise and only one in four had received specialist New Dimensions training. 37% had received training from a DVD or CD, 25% from a talk or presentation at the station or in the brigade, 26% as part of some basic training and 15% said they had no training at all. These figures do not add up to 100% because some personnel had training or instruction in a range of ways.

45% had received three or more day's training and 55% had received 2 day's or less.

The adequacy of the training was marked at only 2.4 on a scale of one to ten with a third saying it was "completely inadequate". Overall, asked to rate the preparedness of the fire service to deal with ND incidents based on their own experience, it was rated 2.81 out of a possible high of 10.

The poll was conducted between 11 and 17 January by polling firm YouGov and was used in evidence to the House of Commons Select Committee looking at the fire service. 2,515 FBU members responded to an online survey.

National officer John McGhee, who is now responsible for the union's New Dimension work said: "There is clearly a very strong message that we need more training, more equipment and more personnel yet they are

still in cuts mode in many brigades. We have pointed out to Government the folly of cutting the service which is in the first response to any New Dimensions incident and we will continue to press that message home.

"Too many fire authorities are pushing through cuts without any thought to the need to provide personnel and equipment for a regional or national ND incident. The Government has issued neither guidance nor advice as to what brigades need to do, so many of them are failing to address the issue and hoping it does not happen.

"The difficult question the Government wants to avoid is how many personnel and how much equipment would be needed to deal with a series of major incidents. We have now given them the answer and we will not let them continue to duck the issue."

'We need more training, more equipment and more personnel'

The 7/7 bombings in London could clearly give some direct clues to Government, one reason why they have set themselves against a public inquiry. General Secretary Matt Wrack has called for a speedy and open public inquiry into the response to the attacks of 7 July to ensure all the lessons are learned.

He warned that although 7/7 was horrendous, it was nowhere near the worst case scenarios the emergency services are planning to react to.

The call came in the wake of the London Assembly's inquiry report into how the emergency services coped with the aftermath of three bombs on the Underground and a bomb on a bus in Tavistock Square. This inquiry was limited in its scope and did not consider if the emergency services had enough personnel.

Only months before the bombings the London fire service had closed Manchester Square station, near Oxford Street and started

moving significant numbers of personnel out of central London to the suburbs. London FBU had warned this would have implications if there was an attack on central London.

The London Assembly inquiry did find serious failings in communications. In the aftermath of the King's Cross fire, the Fennell inquiry recommended communications systems for use by all emergency services below ground, although this was only actioned for the Transport Police.

Matt Wrack said: "All emergency services did the very best job they could with the equipment, numbers of personnel and training available. This was often at great personal risk with many working above and beyond the call of duty.

"Although horrendous, the 7/7 attacks were nowhere near the worst case scenarios emergency services have been planning for. We had a horrific wake up call and we need a



eeded



A PUBLIC INQUIRY

A public inquiry would need to address several key areas including:

- The need for modern communications which enables proper radio contact above and below ground with all individual fire-fighters and commanders at incidents. This was one of the key lessons of 9/11 as well as 7/7 which will not be addressed by the Government's regional control centres or their new digital radio system.
- Assess the resource implications of 7/7 in terms of the numbers of fire crews, training and equipment needed across the UK. There is limited point in having significant amounts of new equipment if there are not the necessary numbers with the necessary training to use it and to support what may be long-term commitments at major incidents.
- Assess the preparations for dealing with what may be a number of simultaneous attacks in different cities across the UK. Throwing resources at incidents is not the same as planning a response and we believe there are still critical lessons to be learned

speedy public inquiry to ensure all the lessons have been truly learned.

"The Government needs to pause and consider whether it is doing all it can in the light of all the lessons which can be learned. The truth is the fire service was very badly stretched dealing with the horrific devastation caused by what were four relatively small improvised bombs.

"A public inquiry looking into the emergency response is critical to ensuring all the facts are known and all the lessons are properly learned.

"These lessons are not just for London but for the whole of the UK.

"There is a danger that Government will go into defensive spin mode and that, as a result, valuable lessons may not be learned. That must be avoided so the UK really does become better prepared for more and far worse attacks."

'A public inquiry is critical to ensure facts are known and lessons learned'



GET WILSHER OUT OF
HERTFORDSHIRE.
STOP THE CLOSURE.



ENOUGH!

Hertfordshire members continue the battle for jobs and the safety of the local community. Right, how the Union is campaigning elsewhere

Hertfordshire fire crews have suspended a 48-hour strike due to have started at 18.00 on Thursday 15 June to consider fresh proposals from the fire authority. The 48-hour strike – and three successful eight-hour strikes on May 20, May 26 and May 31 – were called over a savage cuts and closures plan.

The dispute is in opposition to the loss of 40 frontline posts, the closure of Radlett and Bovingdon Stations, the downgrading of other stations and cuts at Stevenage, Hemel Hempstead, Watford and St Albans. All of the stations were among the first to respond to the Buncefield explosion and fire on 11 December.

Prior to the fresh offer, FBU Hertfordshire had called for face to face talks with the group

leaders of all three political parties because in their view the county councillors were getting a “misleading picture”. Tony Smith, Herts FBU vice-chair, slammed as “unacceptable” that the council hadn’t discussed the cuts and closures plan since 28 March.

The Union has scaled back action previously with a promise of new proposals which never arrived. In remarks ahead of this latest proposal, the FBU complained of “sham” consultations, and described talks as a “charade”.

“We are not going to sit back and watch as they close down our fire stations and axe more than 40 jobs from our frontline 999 service. It is our lives and those of our communities they are putting at risk with these cuts,” said Tony Smith, Herts FBU vice-chair.

“Neither fire crews nor the public believe that having fewer firefighters and closing fire

stations improves safety. Councillors want to save cash but we want to continue to save lives.”

On 2 March, Hertfordshire members voted 85.4% in favour of strike action to defend their jobs and the safety of their communities.

Members from across the country and officials from all the levels of the Union – including the General Secretary Matt Wrack and President Ruth Winters – have shown their solidarity to Hertfordshire members by attending picket lines, sending messages of support and contributing generously to the Hertfordshire Hardship Fund.

Herts Hardship Fund

Name of Account:

Herts Fire Dispute Hardship Fund

Account Number: 41389041

Sort Code: 40-39-22



ANDREW WARD



HAPPENING NEAR YOU!

→ CLEVELAND

Cleveland fire crews have accused the fire authority of having a cavalier attitude to safety and given notice they will hold a strike ballot over savage fire service cuts. Under the cuts plans fire stations will be downgraded, 66 frontline firefighter posts will be lost and specialist rescue equipment will be axed. The proposals include:

Stranton Fire Station: fire engine removed from immediate operational availability and only used as a reserve.

Marine Fire Station: station downgraded with permanent staffing only from 12.00hrs to 24.00 hrs only.

Thornaby Fire Station: crew size cut to a minimum attendance for life risk incidents of two fire engines with only eight firefighters, emergency response times remain unchanged.

Redcar Fire Station: crew size cut to a minimum attendance

for life risk incidents of two fire engines with only eight firefighters, emergency response times remain unchanged. A specialist rescue appliance, a hydraulic platform, will also be axed.

Telfer Whitfield, Chair, Cleveland FBU said: "These cuts will mean fewer firefighters taking longer to get to incidents which will clearly compromise safety. Downgrading stations and cutting frontline posts means back-up will take longer to arrive which will harm our ability to do our jobs at emergency incidents."

→ SOUTH WALES

In South Wales, the Union is fighting off plans to eliminate 30 full-time frontline firefighter jobs that will lead an increase in emergency response times by up to 10 minutes, and may deprive several communities of a guaranteed turnout from their local station.

These full-time jobs are

being lost at day-crewed stations at **Abertillery**, **Abercarn**, **Caldicot** and **Cowbridge**. The fire authority's "risk reduction plan" also foresees moving two appliances out of **Cardiff central**, the busiest station in the brigade.

Brigade secretary John Jenkins said: "Firefighters have made clear their opposition to the plans and their willingness to fight them with industrial action, if necessary." A number of Welsh Assembly members and members of the local community have also voiced serious concerns.

"Emergency response times may increase significantly," said John Jenkins. "We are very worried about the safety of local communities and that of our members. However we are in a three-month consultation period and are hopeful that the fire and rescue authority will give proper consideration to our responses and address the concerns of FBU members in South Wales."

→ STAFFORDSHIRE

The campaign against cuts in Staffordshire is building with the local community and politicians joining firefighters in opposition at the downgrading of fire cover.

The fire authority has decided to halve the number of appliances from two to one at three retained fire stations - **Cheadle**, **Uttoxeter** and **Wombourne**.

"We've been talking to our members and the message we are getting back is that they are not going to swallow this brutal attack on the local fire service," said Chris Woods.

"The fire authority claims this is about protecting the public – nothing could be further from the truth. The changes could cost lives."

The changes include a new payment scheme for firefighters working the retained duty system which some retained members believe would leave them out of pocket.

WHAT DOES AN FBU REGIONAL OFFICIAL DO?

With campaigns against cuts ramping up in Cleveland and Northumberland, Pete Wilcox is a busy man

PICTURES: MARK PINDER



Pete Wilcox (left) and Cleveland brigade secretary Steve Watson at Stockton Fire station

Pete Wilcox, a regional FBU official in the North East, doesn't have a minute to spare these days. His email inbox is overflowing, there are wall-to-wall meetings and his phone rarely stops ringing. What with a possible ballot over cuts approaching in Cleveland and the campaign against station closures and downgrades in Northumberland continuing, it is not hard to understand why. Then there's the ongoing work on the campaign against the closure of control rooms, arming members and officials with the Union's education programme and last but not least, representing the FBU in the regional TUC.

But whether it's providing advice and support to FBU members and officials or playing a role in the wider trade union movement, he relishes the work.

Pete, 40, joined the fire service in 1992 in Essex. As a branch rep, he cut his activist teeth during the 1997 dispute in the brigade. Once this had ended, he transferred to Tyne & Wear, and today is a crew manager at Colby Court fire station. In April 2004 he was elected regional official. But having served at branch and division level, and sat on brigade

and regional committees as Gay and Lesbian regional rep, he was hardly a novice when he became one of the four regional officials at Region 3 office just over two years ago.

"My grounding in trade unionism is very much linked to the G&L section and the issues are very close to my heart since they affect me in everyday life. But I'm also very aware of the wider issues and problems facing all members. It's important not to be a one trick pony. That was the reason for accepting nomination for the regional official post two years ago."

Support and advice

Pete's priority at the moment, as the regional official responsible specifically for Cleveland brigade, is to provide brigade officials with support and advice in their campaign against the axing of 66 frontline emergency response posts and equipment as well as station downgrades in a number of communities. This work also means "stepping in as a substitute for brigade officials, ensuring they have their rightful time off and those remaining are not overloaded with work."

Not that he gets much time himself to wind down and relax with his family. "As with many

of our officials I do not have full-time facilities, so I have to fit the union responsibilities with working on shift. I'm part of Green Watch and put in 48 hours over an 8 day rota period. This means I typically work a 70-80 hour week."

New technology has definitely made the job easier, however. "If somebody needs to contact me but can't get me on the phone they can easily email me," says Pete. Although it can be a mixed blessing. At 10 o'clock on a Friday



Cleveland brigade committee: (Back row l to r) Bob Cross; Peter Messiter; Ian Hudson, (membership secretary); Jeff Crawford; Richi Jones; Brian Gibson and John Briggs. (Front row) Telfer Whitfield, (chair); Steve Watson, (brigade secretary); and Dave Howe, (brigade vice chair)



or Saturday night on a weekend off, Pete can often get calls on his mobile from members about one issue or another. "But that's the nature of the job", he says, "particularly when representing workers in a 24/7 service where a member may need some information while on shift".

The work has its frustrations too. "I never have enough time to do everything you would like to do on behalf of members. Nor do I have the time to meet as many members face to face as I would like." Although it helps that Pete is a lay regional official. "Being on a shift keeps me focused on many of the issues. When not on the watch you can become a little detached from it. Of course, there is a downside. It means I have less time to give to the Union and the membership."

The motto of trade unions is "unity is strength". And that counts as much for the FBU and the fire service as in the wider labour movement. Pete represents the FBU on the regional TUC executive and within this the LGBT forum, the Race Advisory Group and Public Sector Forum, networks which allow trade unions in the North to work together on joint campaigns in defence of working people

and their families. "It's all about making sure other people understand issues facing the fire service – and for us to understand the battles that our brothers and sisters in other sectors are fighting. I have seen how useful the TUC links have been with the Northumberland campaign against the closure of community fire stations to make way for new remote stations under the massively expensive private finance initiative. Colleagues in other unions were up to speed with the campaign and this in turn helped secure strong public backing."

Education programme

So what are the key requisites for the job? "Diplomacy – something I'm still working on! And the ability to work effectively in all political arenas, at all levels. The organisations and individuals we have to deal with are very competent and we as officials need to match those skills. That's why the Union's education programme is so important. If we want to encourage members to get more involved in the Union by becoming reps and officials we need an education programme that makes them feel able to take on the responsibilities being asked of them."

Working For You

ROSIE TULLY

Control rep

Gloucestershire



Rosie Tully works in fire control in Gloucestershire, where she is control room rep and FBU membership secretary. With colleagues, she is campaigning against plans to shut the county fire control room – and others in the South West – to create a remote centre in Taunton as part of the Government's plans for regional control rooms.

When Rosie Tully speaks up for the crucial importance of local knowledge, she speaks with the authority of someone who has worked in fire control for 15 years, guiding crews to emergencies and dispensing potentially life-saving advice to distraught members of the public.

"You cannot underestimate local knowledge when it comes to saving lives. We will lose this if they bring in super control rooms in every region. The public will suffer and lives will be lost if we lose local control rooms."

Rosie knows firsthand just how important such knowledge can be – she and her family, were rescued when fire ripped through the house a year ago. "We had to get the kids out on the roof in the middle of the night. But local crews had no trouble finding our little cottage tucked away in the middle of nowhere, thank goodness."

Rosie and Gloucestershire colleagues have been out on the streets in Cheltenham, Cirencester, Stroud and Tewkesbury to alert the public to the threat to public safety posed by the government's plans – and argue for the less expensive FBU alternative detailed in the recently launched document, *Regional Control: National Resilience*.

"Under our proposals, people will not lose their local control room and all that local knowledge. But they will still get the "resilience" the government is keen to see because of the threat of terrorist attacks.

"It's just ludicrous to lose all that local expertise. With the amount of tourism in the South-West, people could have very sketchy local knowledge when they need fire crews to help."

➔ More info:

www.fbu.org.uk/campaigns/outofcontrol/

Keep on moving

Back pain is a major health problem, affecting over one third of the population

Back pain is a major health problem, it affects around 17.3 million people in the UK – over one third of the population. Over the course of a year, approximately 3.5 million people experience back pain for the first time and for 3.1 million of those people the pain will last throughout the whole year. Persistent and chronic back pain can seriously affect people's lives. It can affect their ability to work and socialise normally and therefore hinder the person's overall emotional health and well-being. Firefighters can be especially at risk in emergency situations, where they may be forced to move or lift people or heavy objects without the specialist equipment necessary to protect their backs.

Causes of back pain

Although some medical conditions may require specialist treatment or even surgery, most back pain is not a result of any serious disease and can be attributed to wear and tear of the spine, incorrect posture or 'putting the back out' through regular activities.

The standard advice when pain strikes

COMMON CAUSES OF BACK PAIN:

- Moving and lifting heavy objects incorrectly
- Sudden jarring caused by an accident
- Poor posture and staying in the same position for too long
- Exercising the wrong way without gradual build up and warming up
- Long hours of driving
- Pregnancy

is to stay as active as you can, taking painkillers by the clock to help you keep moving, but you should see your doctor if symptoms persist, if you have had an accident, or if you feel generally unwell.

One woman's story

Each back pain story is different and there are many treatments on the market, what works for one back may not work for another, the trick is to keep trying until you find the solution that works for you.

BackCare volunteer Maggie Hayward has suffered from chronic back pain for most of her adult life. The agony has had a huge

impact on her life and has at times rendered her unable to work, socialise, or play with her children.

Maggie has had numerous operations including the removal of a disc, having vertebrae fused together and plates and screws inserted into her spine. After each surgery the pain returned, worse than before.

She has now found some relief thanks to a back pain management programme, which finally allowed her to enjoy life for the first time in years.

She learned that movement helped her condition and now has a 30-minute daily exercise programme.

The pain has not gone but she has learned to live with it. "There is no miracle cure. You have to learn to adjust to a different way of life," says Maggie.

Protecting young backs

Back pain may traditionally be viewed as an older person's condition, but it affects people of all ages including children.

Recent studies have found that almost half of school aged children will suffer from back pain at some point during their school life with 8-10% suffering chronic or recurrent back pain bad enough to affect their daily tasks and emotional wellbeing.

Slumping over badly designed school furniture and sitting for long periods of time imposes unnecessary pressure on the discs in the back, and can lead to early onset of back pain.

In addition to this, many children have no access to a locker at school and, as parents are painfully aware, are forced to carry their books, together with their sports equipment to and around school all day.

As a result of increasing concern about the health of our children's backs, BackCare decided to launch its 2006 campaign Protecting Young Backs to lobby the government and raise public awareness about the problem.

During BackCare Awareness Week – 16–21 October – BackCare will be encouraging schools to run back awareness days, presentations on back health and weighing of school bags.

➔ To get involved with the campaign call the BackCare office on 020 8977 5474. To donate to BackCare visit www.backcare.org.uk/getinvolved or text the keyword BCE to 84858



ANATOMICAL TRAVELLOGUE/SCIENCE PHOTO

Most back pain is not a result of any serious disease

Purchase of unfinished new property

Q I have bought a new property and the building work has not been done properly and is unfinished, what can I do?

A If you have bought a newly built property and experience problems during any warranty period, you may be able to get some help to resolve your dispute with the seller/builders. The National House Building Council (NHBC) is a trade organisation for house builders and provides a warranty and insurance for newly built homes by companies who are their members.

If you are dissatisfied with the response from the NHBC, and you bought the house from a company, you can report them to the local trading standards department.

If there is no warranty to rely upon, you may have to take your own action against the building company if you can prove their work was not done properly. You may wish to consult a solicitor to sue for the cost of the repairs and/or damage caused. It would be advisable to get a report from a chartered surveyor to give you a comprehensive list of the problems in detail.

Contact details:
In England and Wales
NHBC, Buildmark House,
Chiltern Avenue, Amersham
Bucks
HP6 5AP
01494 434477
www.nhbc.co.uk

RICS Contact Centre
Surveyor Court
Westwood Way
Coventry
CV4 8JE
0870 333 1600
www.rics.org.uk



SATOSHI KAMBAYASHI

Legal Beagle

Answers to some frequently asked legal questions that members put to the FBU

New property left in a state

Q I have recently bought a house and I am not happy with the state it was left in, is there anything I can do?

A If a property is just left dirty there is nothing you can do as the seller is under no legal obligation to leave the property in a clean state. However, they must leave the property empty with no furniture or belongings, unless agreed. If anything has been

left you should ask the seller to remove them. If they fail to do so, you may need to arrange to have them moved yourself but any costs could potentially be claimed back from the seller in court. You will have to consider whether it is worth taking the matter further.

Abuse from the neighbours

Q I have a problem with abuse from my neighbours, what can I do to stop this?

A Anti-social behaviour is that which causes, or is likely to cause, harassment, alarm or distress to a person not of the same household. The behaviour would have to be persistent and could be in the form of intimidation, threats of, or actual, violence, harassment, verbal abuse, noise or property damage. The action you could take could be to have the behaviour stopped, to get compensation for any damage, loss or injury suffered, for you to be rehoused or the other party to be moved/evicted.

Steps you could take include contacting a local tenants association or applying for an injunction, that is, an order by the court that something must be done or not done. You could also start your own criminal prosecution at magistrates' court under the Protection from Harassment Act 1997 if you have been harassed in any way. The police and the Local Authority can also prosecute under this Act.

If cost is an issue and you wish to get a court order (eviction and/or injunction) to stop the behaviour happening again you should contact either the landlord to get them to take action, or the local authority to take action by, for example, issuing an anti social behaviour order. If the Local Authority refuse to help, you can complain through their internal complaints procedure and then to the Local Government Ombudsman. The police may also be able to assist by taking criminal proceedings against the perpetrator. Local Government Ombudsman www.lgo.org.uk/pdf/neighbour-nuisance-asb.pdf

→ Write in with your legal problem to legalbeagle@fbu.org.uk and those of widest relevance to FBU members in the workplace will be selected and answered in future editions. With thanks to Thompsons solicitors.

‘Our band is generating a lot of interest’

ALAN WYLLIE

Graeme Thom saw an ad for a frontman when on a shout to a local college. He now writes most of the up-and-coming band's new material and they are headlining their gigs

The Jaks have been going for about five years with numerous line-up changes. I joined about a year ago after seeing an advert for a frontman when we were called out to a fire alarm at a local college. I ripped it from the wall as we came off the job and followed it up, had an audition and they called me later that week to say I'd got the gig. I'd been writing new songs, got a demo disc done – and have been writing most of the band's new material since.

The rest of the band have just finished their final years of college and university. We all work very well together and tried to get it spot on before we started doing new live dates with the new line-up. We've done over a dozen live gigs in the past eight months and are now getting ready to cut a four-track demo disc. In Glasgow there are so many pubs and clubs it's not that hard to get gigs, but we try to hold out for reasonably sized venues now.

Lead singer

We played our first full electric set together at Strathclyde Students' Union back in November, and we've also played at a few venues on Sauchiehall Street – The Garage nightclub – a large rock club full of students – and – where there are usually two or three bands scheduled, each playing a 45 minute set. We've also played at The 13th Note Café and Barfly which are quite respected in the main music inner circle.

I'm the lead singer and play electro-acoustic rhythm guitar as well – that's an acoustic guitar that plugs into an amp. The rest of the band were only advertising for a singer, but seemed quite pleased I could also

play and wanted to write songs. It seems to work quite well – we all get on.

The influences within the band are quite mixed as The Jaks move away from heavy rock. There are five members in the band and our influences range from Motley Crew and Queen all the way through to Oasis and The Who.

Demo discs

I like anybody from Pink Floyd to David Gray. It's a strange mix of influences, but it seems to work quite well. We are an indie rock band, but sometimes it's a wee bit lighter and we get all acoustic, like some of the lighter Stereophonics stuff. People seem to like it. As for lyrical content – it's just whatever comes into my head, without trying to sound too cheesy or obvious. I made solo demo discs before I joined the Jaks; I had tunes in my head and I just wanted to get them down. They were quite well received by friends and family, which encouraged me to stick with it and maybe go a bit further.

The band has a growing fan-base in Glasgow now, and usually end up headlining gigs, which is quite encouraging. We are not signed at the moment but are generating a lot of interest out there. Nobody's come on to us with a really strong offer yet so we're just going to get out there plugging away and hope something will come of it.

Music is all about writing your own material, playing it live in front of people and getting them to sit up and listen and enjoy themselves. You get to read an audience – some songs don't work in certain places and sometimes you have to adjust the set you'd planned. We've got quite a big bank





GRAEME THOM

Graeme Thom, 25, is a firefighter on green watch at Cowcaddens station in central Glasgow. He is lead singer, songwriter and electro-acoustic guitarist with up-and-coming Glasgow band 'The Jaks'

of songs and rehearse at least twice a week when possible.

I joined the brigade after serving a four-year apprenticeship in civil engineering. But it wasn't for me. I've been on the watch for just over five years now, and it suits me down to the ground. I love the job and my colleagues are very helpful and will swap a shift if we get an important gig unexpectedly.

We are just about ready to record a couple more demo discs over the next few weeks, which should be enough to put an album together and get more people listening. At the moment we're handing

I love the job and my colleagues are very helpful and will swap a shift if we get an important gig unexpectedly

out demos at gigs and getting a lot of good response. The website – www.myspace.com/thejaks – has had almost 3,000 hits in the last few months. The band have a bank of songs that are quite heavy rock, but the sound has moved on now and become lighter since I started writing songs.

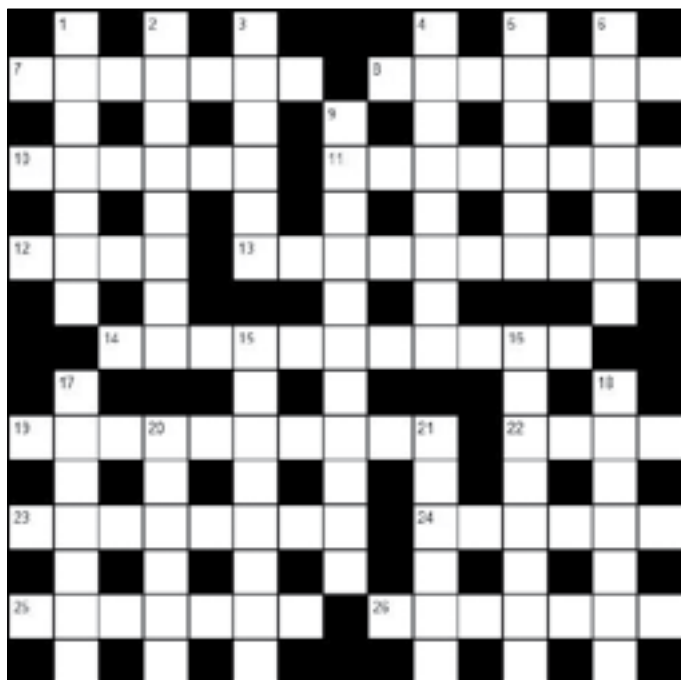
The rest of the band seem quite happy with this. We work very well together. I love the station camaraderie at work, and one of the songs I've written – Footsteps – draws on this, it tells how the old school firefighters may get a bit of stick at times, but people have a lot of respect for them and want to follow in their footsteps. It's a bit cheeky, but quite affectionate.

➔ More info: www.myspace.com/thejaks



The Jaks on stage at g2 in Glasgow

Quick Crossword

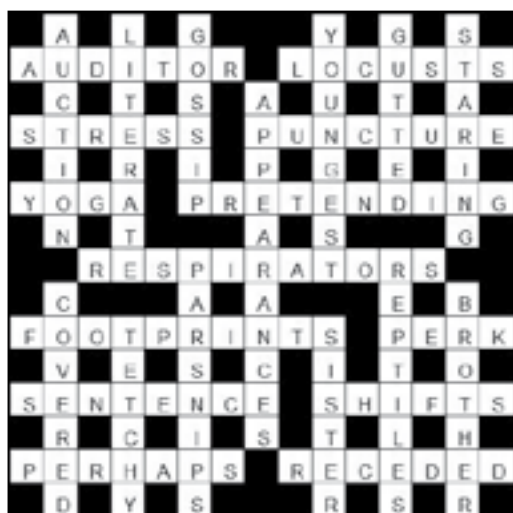


ACROSS

- 7, 10** Biggest stoppage in British history, 1926 (7, 6)
8 Every child likes to visit one (3,4)
10 See 7
11 Well off (8)
12 Dry (4)
13 Find, again (10)
14 They keep us up to date (11)
19 Hiding (10)
22 Former German currency (4)
23 Come nearer (8)
24 Movie, with sound (6)
25 Deducted from account (7)
26 Small succulent fruits, usually on bushes (7)

DOWN

- 1** Faulty ones might do more than warm you up! (7)
2 Light again (8)
3 Progress through life or profession (6)
4 Befuddled (8)
5 Former Portuguese currency (6)
6 Less long in the tooth (7)
9 Romantic, but hazardous if unattended (11)
15 Mariner (8)
16 People who like walking (8)
17 Not a simple building?! (7)
18 Completely emptied (7)
20 Canines favoured by Windsors (6)
21 Burnt out – very disappointed! (6)



Solution to June crossword



MARY EVANS PICTURE LIBRARY

Prize Quiz

Win a Pure digital Oasis radio

Enter our prize quiz and it could be yours.

This month fire in mythology.

Just name the central figure in the following five clues.

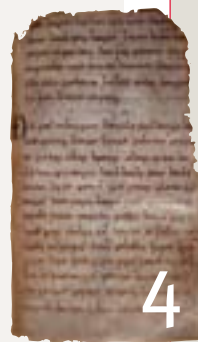
1 A Christian martyr who lived in the Middle East in around AD.200 – myth has it that he slayed a dragon. In the 1300s he became patron saint of England.

2 In Greek legend, a Titan, he stole fire from the Gods to give to mankind and was punished for it by Zeus who had him chained to a rock where an eagle tore at his immortal body for thousands of years.

3 In Roman mythology this goddess was worshipped as the guardian of the sacred fire – source of life and immortality. Vestal virgins tended to the fire in the Temple of Vesta.

4 Part history part mythology – an epic poem was written about this Scandinavian warrior of the 6th century – another slayer of dragons.

5 Mentioned in Greek, Roman and Egyptian mythology – a legendary bird from whose ashes would arise new life.



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HOW TO ENTER

Send your answers to the prize quiz by 31 August on a postcard to: Prize Competition (July/August 2006) FBU Head Office, Bradley House, 68 Coombe Road, Kingston upon Thames, KT2 7AE. Include your name, address and membership number. The winner will be selected at random from all correct entries.



Answers to June's quiz
 1 Rome
 2 London
 3 Moscow
 4 San Francisco
 5 Mont Blanc

Winner of the portable DVD player in our May quiz was Scott Hill, Sheffield

StationCat

... brings you the news they don't want you to hear

Go2 02



The generosity of 02 appears without bounds so it must be feeling flush at the moment. But then it has secured the multi-billion pound contracts to supply the national digital radio networks to fire, police and ambulance in England. That has not gone without some poor publicity though. There was a furore when CFOA President Tom Carroll took a free ticket from 02 for an international rugby match.

Tom was not alone as the newspapers then named a string of senior police officers who also took hospitality from 02. The tabloids then named Lancashire chief fire officer Peter Holland as taking 02's free hospitality on three occasions (including the same match as Mr Carroll).

Neither Mr Holland nor Mr Carroll played any role in the contract process for the fire service digital radio network – FireLink – and any suspicion of wrongdoing is entirely without foundation. As 02 made clear “we do not buy contracts with favours” and it shocks me to the whiskers that anyone could think such a thing.

But the stories prompted 02 to make a series of public statements including: “We do offer hospitality to our customers and that is perfectly normal business practice. Corporate hospitality is about getting close to your customers and we believe in keeping close ties.”

Station Cat likes keeping close ties too. As a fire service customer – hey, that's all of us – I have already applied for my free tickets to sporting events citing this quote and writing to: Peter Richardson, Chief Executive, 02, Wellington Street, Slough, Berkshire, SL1 1YP.

Claws crossed. Let's hope it's Bali away.

Nice ads



Like a rusty coiled spring CLoG (the department for Communities and Local Government which replaced NO DPM) has sprung into action to sell itself as the champion of women in the fire service. Well, an expensive

advertising campaign, which in New Labour Land is better than real action.

They will have problems convincing firefighters (control) as they live in the real world and not New La La Land. They may just be a teensy bit furious at the sheer ‘front’ of CLoG on this issue.

Like its predecessor NO DPM, CLoG is still targeting the group with the largest number



of women in the fire service. In a mad smash up of emergency fire control rooms, CLoG plans to rid itself of nearly half the women on the operational side of the fire service.

Nice ads if they actually meant it. Shame CLoG is doing exactly the opposite.

Career opportunities



A CLoG bod had a great idea: let's run these recruitment ads in places where we're actually getting rid of firefighter posts. We can pretend we're recruiting when we're doing the opposite. Go to the top of New Labour spin school.

Station Cat was more than surprised to find this has actually happened. In Hertfordshire, where they plan to axe 50 frontline posts and close two stations.

All the local sports centres have the wall-size adverts encouraging women to apply to join the fire service (they don't actually say there are any jobs of course, nor that stations are under threat of closure).

The arrival of the adverts exactly coincides with Herts chief Roy Wilsher's plans to axe 50 frontline firefighter posts across the county. Crews from Hemel Hempstead station, which is losing four posts, can spot recruitment adverts for women firefighters on the way up to the weights room and contemplate losses at their station as they pass.

The Bovingdon crews are spoilt for choice as they have the opportunity to see the recruitment adverts at both Hemel and Berkhamsted Sports Centres. They too can peruse the new career opportunities as they think about life after their redundancy if Wilsher gets his wish and closes the station.

Do let Station Cat know of any more sightings in areas where cuts are being planned.

No2 02



The old north/south rivalry is going full swing among chief officers in the fire service. London chief

Ken Knight was basking in his whopping annual pay rise of 17.5% granted in January this year which took his salary to a paltry £175,000.

London can afford it, think of the money they can make from the sale of Manchester Square fire station – just north of Oxford Street – and closed by Mr Knight.

Now we have what appears to be a new record annual pay rise for a chief officer. Step forward Manchester's Barry Dixon bursting past Ken Knight with a 23% pay rise for him, his deputy and each of his three assistant chiefs.

Don't be silly. All are worth every penny.

On the bright side, the higher salaries mean they can afford to buy their own tickets to international sporting events. They can say N02 02.

→ If you have any snippets you think Station Cat should get his sharp claws into then e-mail: stationcat@fbu.org.uk

25 year badges



Dave McBride (left) receives his 25 year badge from Fife Brigade Chair Alex Kinnear



Ian Kennerley (left) of B watch Northwich Station, Cheshire, receives his 25 year badge from branch rep Tony Kane and crew manager Dave Rose



Ian Maguire (right), blue watch, Hadleigh, Essex receives his 25 year badge from branch rep Nigel Davidge



Steve Milner (right), green watch Scarborough, receives his 25 year badge from East Division chair Alistair Biggs



Gary Fletcher (right), green watch Scarborough, receives his 25 year badge from East Division chair Alistair Biggs



John Glendinning (left), blue watch Dumfries, receives his 25 year badge from Brigade Chair Colin Irving



Pete Nowakiwskyj (left), Chelmsford green watch, receives his 25 year badge from Chelmsford branch chair Martin Ketley



Dave Pym (left), Chelmsford green watch, receives his 25 year badge from Chelmsford branch chair Martin Ketley



John Saynor (right), Education Officer, Canterbury, receives his 25 year badge from Brigade Secretary Harry Sawyer



Nick Ralph (right) North Division Secretary, Thameside branch, receives his 25 year badge from Brigade Secretary Harry Sawyer

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Change of address or next of kin

Advise your Brigade Membership Secretary of any change of address and Head Office of changes to next of kin or nominations for benefits.

FBU FREEPHONE LEGAL ADVICE LINE

0800 100 6061

The line provides advice for **personal injury, family law, wills, conveyancing, personal finance and consumer issues.**

For disciplinary and employment-related queries contact your local FBU representative.

T
THOMPSONS
SOLICITORS

Please send photographic prints or digital picture files to:
Firefighter, FBU, 68 Coombe Road, Kingston upon Thames,
KT2 7AE or firefighter@fbu.org.uk (Please note that inkjet
prints from digital pictures reproduce very poorly).

Please include FULL DETAILS for every picture – full names
of everyone who is in it; their station/watch etc; where they
are in the picture (eg: left to right); their union posts/branch
if relevant; and where and when it was taken.